1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

to seniors, first in the household then in the society at large, that is the most important social learning of childhood. Kanuri society is hierarchical. Whether the person is in one compound or another, one social situation or another, there is always one common feature—rank and its determinants, power and authority. By living in several compounds, by seeing authority at work in the community, and by learning to generalize his response to authority, the young child learns to respond easily and gracefully to many combinations of rank and position. His counterpart in western society may be learning how to cope with the intricacies of modern urban technology, but he would certainly be no match for his Kanuri counterpart in the diplomacy necessary in dealing with superiors.

Puberty

Puberty is not an age-grade in the same sense as childhood or adolesence. Yet it deserves some special attention because it is a marker that separates these two life periods and creates a means for very important transitions especially for young girls. Sometime between the age of twelve and fourteen most girls undergo their first marriage. Boys on the other hand begin their adolescence. This is a more carefree time for them than the period of intense training for adulthood that a girl is suddenly confronted with as she moves from childhood into her teenage period and marriage.

However there are no absolutely sharp breaks even for a girl. A newly married young girl is not considered totally grown-up and sometimes she continues to wear her hair in the childhood style. If she divorces during this early period, usually the first three or four years after her first marriage, people often speak of her as *njim suri* or one who is only beginning to become a woman but who has not completed the change-over to full adultlhood.[1] At first the young wife still sees many unmarried childhood friends who will soon be getting married themselves. They visit her when she is confined to the house for varying periods depending upon how secluded her husband wishes his wife to be. Only gradually over the period of the first year or so of marriage does the young girl begin to participate fully as a wife. From the first she cooks food regularly because it is her duty and her right, and as time goes on she is seen more and more in the company of the older, adult women of the compound and the neighborhood. If she is not in total seclusion, like most rural wives, then she can be seen going with the women to the well or the market, and to women's festivities in the village.

Although rare it sometimes happens that a girl misses the opportunity to marry while still in her early teens. Leaving aside the very few girls who go on in school, such cases are rather tragic. The girl is either mentally deficient or a disturbed person, or one who people say has been having love affairs before marriage. In such cases she changes her hair style in her middle to late teens and takes on the role of a single divorced woman seeking a new husband and therefore open to courtship and sexual liaisons with men.

In Magumeri one young girl about fifteen or sixteen who was well de-

[1] Literally *njim suri* means to have seen inside the hut, that is she has been alone with her husband but only seen or glimpsed at the activities of adulthood not really practiced them in full.

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

882 883 581 156 veloped physically had not yet married. There were many rumors and much gossip to the effect that she was no longer a virgin and that men of the town slept with her. Her father, it was said, would have a hard time arranging her first marriage. The girl herself seemed to be suffering increasingly from her inability to see herself in the role of a child awaiting marriage instead of that of a developing young matron—the role now common among her young age mates. Thus in order to take up a normal position in society, girls are supposed to have their first marriages in and around the time of puberty. Failure to do so indicates a deviant and degrading development. This is the reason why almost all Bornu men say that girls who go on in the educational system are "spoiled" and should never be allowed to stay in school beyond the traditional age of marriage. The girls in school see the matter differently; the situation remains today one of tension, with the majority against education for girls, and the schools themselves looking for students and preaching a somewhat different attitude toward a girl's adolescence than that held traditionally by the people.

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Another point should also be noted. Most girls have very little choice, if any, in their first marriage arrangements. If they are very drastically opposed to the union, their views are considered since parents are afraid they might behave badly as young wives. However they are traditionally supposed to respect the wishes of their parents and comply with their demands. Indeed many Kanuri, both men and women, know very little about their first marriage arrangements at all since these are almost entirely made by their parents or the head of the compound they are living in at the time. It should also be realized that many Kanuri girls marry for the first time with men sometimes as much as two, three, and even four times their own age which enhances the traditional seniority of the husband as well as taking any "romance" out of it for the girls.

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881 [304] Sometime around the end of childhood and into the beginning of the teenage period young boys are circumcized. This event is fundamentally a ceremonial occasion and is thus related only in a rough general way to the actual onset of puberty for each boy. Generally speaking boys are cut in groups, although in rural areas it is not uncommon to see a family performing the ceremony for just one boy in the household. On the other hand circumcision among high-ranking people such as village heads, district heads, members of the royal family, or rich traders in the city attracts many other families who try to have their own children cut at the same time to participate in the large festivities. Usually the higher the rank of the leading families involved in a circumcision the greater the number of boys who are likely to be cut at the same time.

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881 571 The important thing is not the readiness of the boy. Rather it is the auspiciousness of the occasion in terms of the family's relationship to the rest of the community. Is there a large circumcision taking place this year? Are a large number of friends and relatives asking when little Abba Gana is going to be circumcized? Have the household members, especially the household head, attended a great many marriage or naming ceremonies? Have other community members been given gifts on these occasions? Is it not time to reap the benefit of all this participation by having a ceremony of one's own to which many people will come and bring gifts of food, clothing, and money for the family and the boy? These and similar questions are the determining factors in the timing of the circumcision ceremony, and

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

they point to the major functions of the event. Certainly it marks publicly the opening of the gates on the road to manhood for the young man, but, much more importantly, it validates, strengthens and dramatizes the relational network of ties that the family and the household maintain and attempt to promote in the society.

At some of the larger ceremonies, especially those held by the high-ranking households in Bornu, there is often a small group of recent converts who ask to join the ceremony in order to mark their religious conversion and obtain full membership in Kanuri society. In one very large circumcision we saw forty-seven boys from high status households and ten Cameroon pagans ranging in age from fifteen to thirty-five. These latter seemed completely ecstatic to have been accepted at the ceremony and were the subject of much ribald joking by the Kanuri participants. However they now had an easier access to Kanuri women as wives and sweethearts, and it is conceivable that when they do in fact marry Kanuri women they and their descendants will eventually be absorbed into Kanuri society. Thus the circumcision ceremony is one of the important gateways into society for non-Moslems from the small tribes surrounding Bornu on its southern and southeastern borders.

As in many cultures around the world, the Kanuri themselves regard the circumcision ceremony as a mark of approaching manhood, and even though the boys are often quite young the ceremony still dramatizes their adult or approaching adult status. Thus after the boys have come out of confinement during which the cut heals, they are given whips which they brandish while chasing and threatening the young girls. The girls must "buy off" such treatment by giving the young boy a few pennies. This ritual was left unexplained by informants who answered questions about its meaning by saying, "We do this because it is our custom." However, it seems likely that it is a symbolic reference to the achievement of manhood or potential manhood. It symbolizes through ritual the cultural value of male dominance which the boys must now begin to practice as they prepare to join the ranks of adult men. The "buying off" of the beating by the little girls can be interpreted to reflect the flexibility of female submissiveness; a woman must behave submissively towards a man but she has levers to gain her own rights and wishes in her relationships with men.

Adolescence

As we have seen, there is an extra age-grade period for boys which lasts from around the time of circumcision to their first marriage between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five. At first the young man is still thought of as a small boy, but as he advances into middle and late teenage years he becomes more of a *zaiyo*—that is to say, a young bachelor. He associates in his free time with other young men his age and begins to gossip about trade, politics, and nocturnal adventures with women. Young boys generally obtain their first sexual experience in their mid to late teenage period from divorced women who are often older than themselves. In their later teens and early twenties they begin to have more serious love affairs of longer duration with young divorced women who may turn out to be their future wives if their first marriages are not already arranged by their parents.

Sitting and listening to a group of these young men discussing matters of

1: Cohen E-4,5 (1956-1965) 1967 MS14 Kanuri MS14

barber and still carries out special chores for his former master. He also claims that he gives the senior barber about fifty percent of all his present receipts. As yet he does not know how to cut face marks, remove the uvula, or perform circumcisions, and so he attends all of these ceremonies with the master barber so that he may continue his education. He hopes that by the next year he will be allowed to perform some of these more advanced operations under supervision. When he has completely finished his education, it will not be necessary to do any chores for the senior or give him any commission. Nevertheless the former apprentice should always pay his respects to his ex-master and give him gifts from time to time.

Other apprentices living with strangers claimed they felt more freedom in the household of the stranger and thus live away from home for their training even though they practice the same craft as their father. Many said that they would return home eventually but for the present it was pleasant to travel around seeing other parts of Bornu. This freedom refers more specifically to their sexual activity or at least to its discussion since the discipline and respect given to the compound head is the same as elsewhere. However many boys discussed sex in front of the compound head while such behavior would be impossible in their natal family households. Some boys reported that their father was dead and they had been sent off by their families to the household of relatives or friends in order to learn an occupation.

In summary, adolsecence sharply divides men and women. A young girl takes on her role as a married woman and it is within marriage that she completes her education for adulthood in Kanuri society. A woman may divorce later on as indeed most do, then remarry and bear children throughout. However the framework of adult life is entered into at a first marriage sometime around puberty. For the boy, on the other hand, adolescence is a socially recognized state in life entered at circumcision. This stage of life is used to complete the young man's education and equip him with the interpersonal and occupational skills that are required as an adult and a potential family head.

Maturity

The mature man is described by the Kanuri as *rashidi*. Ideally this implies that he is married, has a compound of his own and an occupation, the use of some land for farming, and a recognized position in the community as the head of a compound. It also means that he has a certain degree of independence so that if he wished he could move of his own accord to another community. To be a mature man par excellence, he should also have children and the reputation of a person who does things discreetly and diplomatically. Maturity is not simply a term applied to a period of life. It is also a value judgement describing a proper and desirable behavior of an adult man. It is not just a role but an evaluation of that role.

Most people seemed unable or unwilling to answer the question of age in relation to maturity, and so they fell back on marriage claiming that any married man was in fact a mature adult. However a few, notably high ranking people, did give an age and suggested that a person could not be thought of as being fully mature until he was at least thirty-five, very often forty. After this age he is not sup-

881 his connections. The limitations on such social incongruities are
304 twofold. First of all, it would be considered undecorous in the eyes of the community and the person labelled as ro kura (literally: big life, i.e. "pushy" or overly ambitious). Secondly, the elaborateness and therefore the expenses involved increase enormously up through the status hierarchy of the society so that, unless the person has a great deal more wealth than his social position generally implies, he must of necessity carry on the ceremony only with the ranks immediately above or below himself in the social structure.

Exceptions are quite common to both group circumcision and to the two ceremonies held first on the day of the cutting and secondly fifteen days later. Impecunious peasants often prefer a single public ceremony on the day of the cutting. Informants explained that by restricting the ceremony in this fashion they were trying to control the expense.

Adolescence

882 The period after circumcision until marriage is a culturally recognized status for boys. It lasts from about the age of seven to twelve up to the period of eighteen to twenty-two years. For both males and females there is a blurred period between childhood and the next stage of life which in both cases ends roughly at puberty. However, for girls this commonly occurs after their first marriage, while for the boys it does not.

After circumcision the boy can be socially regarded as zairo (literally: attractive in a male sense). However, informants explain that he is still tada gana (a small boy) until he is capable of ejaculation, or until the growth of his pubic hair. The term tada gana is retained and applied to the adolescent to describe his immaturity or

882 lack of achieved skill in some area of behaviour. This extension of the term for child into adolescence must not be mistaken for the European cultural trait of confusing childhood and adulthood in the adolescent period. It refers not just to a lack of skill, but more generally to a lack of power and authority, and in this sense can be utilized to describe anyone until he is an old man. In this context the term is applied to mean that in some particular manner the person is like a small boy in relation to others around him, i.e. he must defer to them. People do not find this unnatural and even middle aged men may refer to themselves as tada gana (small boy).(1)

883 From the time of true physiological puberty onward, the boy associates more and more with other young zairo and takes part more or less freely in the banter of age-mates, and those slightly older. These young boys go to markets, play together, discuss local gossip and politics, and often joke about possible and actual nocturnal [833] adventures with women. On this last point, boys generally receive their first sexual experiences after puberty from divorced women who may vary in age anywhere from fifteen to fifty. More often that not, it is reported that the first experiences are with older women because of the competition for the younger sexually accessible females, (i.e. those who are divorced). Like young men everywhere they discuss the merits of various occupations, the desirability of rural or urban life, but also speak to one another at great length about the qualities of various "big men" (kam kura) in Bornu, and the benefits received by their followers. Today, boys also learn to smoke cigarettes, gamble and to drink intoxicating liquors during this period.

882 463 A primary function of this age status for adolescent boys

(1) See below, p. 174.

882 is occupational choice and training. For most boys the choice is
463 determined by the elders of the household in which they are living or by the economic specialization in their own quarter of town or hamlet. One youth, whose father is a small salt retailer and a farmer, lives in a quarter where many of the household heads are dyers. He has been apprenticed by his father to one of the dyer households in order to learn the trade. In general and especially for rural areas, sons in a household are expected to take up the occupation of the household head.

This should not be thought of, however, as a system in which the young boy merely complies with the wishes of his elders. There is much evidence to show that some degree of personal freedom is involved in occupational choice. For example, a butcher's son remarked that, despite his father's wishes, he would never be a butcher and was planning to learn his Fa-Bro occupation of hides and skins trader. This is especially true today if the young boy is sent to the city to stay with a relative while learning a craft. The plethora of new and different occupations in the city may attract the young man and lead him to make his own decisions about his occupation.

874 There is an apprenticeship system for learning occupations
882 which varies in length depending upon the age of the boy, the socio-economic status of the occupation, and the relationship between the boy and the craftsman. As boys become older they expect their apprenticeship times to be shortened, whereas the earlier an apprenticeship is begun the longer the period of training. However, even in the case of a twenty-two year old, a two to three year period is not uncommon. Again, if the occupation has a higher status and/or pecuniary return,

874 the person taking on the apprentice can expect a longer period of ser-
882 vice in return for his admitting the newcomer into the advantageous job status. Thus lorry drivers, who make comparatively higher incomes, demand a high fee plus a four or five year apprenticeship from persons they take on as initiates. Butchers, although in a low status occupation, also do well financially and therefore obtain longer periods of service from their apprentices. If the relationship between the apprentice and the occupation member is non-consanguineal then the arrangements over terms of apprenticeship are arrived at between the boy and his family on the one hand and the occupation member on the other.

The boy must live in the "master's"house for a stipulated period, helping with all the work of the household, the farming, bringing grass for the horse if there is one, running messages, and helping in the craft work. He is called tada njima (son of the house) and refers to his new household head as aba njima (father of the house). He must act in this situation in the same way as a son would act to his father. If the "master" is already a relative, he refers to the person by the kin term and acts in the same manner described for the non-relative. In the latter case, the arrangements are commonly made earlier in the boy's life and last longer, i.e. it bears more resem-
[578] blance to a true adoption. As was shown in chapter four, the exact time of termination of an apprenticeship can lead to some conflict between them.(1) The following example illustrates that conflict does not always accompany the termination of an apprenticeship.

[441] A young barber apprentice of about nineteen or twenty years
[452] of age had previously been a seller of kola nuts, but decided to give

(1) See above, p. 85.

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882 it up because, as he said, it entailed the constant giving of credit
[441] to his customers and he never seemed to be able to collect all the
[452] money owing to him. His full brother in Maiduguri (who had been his wholesale supplier) advised him that barbering was a good occupation and that one of the local barbers in Magumeri needed a tada njima because his own son was as yet too young to help him. The boy went and asked the barber about it and then made his own arrangements for the apprenticeship (the barber knew the boy's kinsmen). He moved into the barber's compound for one year and became a tada njima. He could visit his own compound in which his mother lived by herself and keep up his own farm. He had to help the barber on his farm, get grass for his horse, carry water now and then, and be ready at all times to run messages for his aba njima (father of the house). The barber taught him how to shave heads and cup blood (for medicinal purposes), and gave him a barber's bag of tools with which he began working, sometimes with his senior, sometimes alone. By right, all receipts of his work during that year were supposed to be given to the barber. Naturally, he pocketed an occasional fee, but not too often; to do so would have been to risk his mentor's dissatisfaction and therefore the end of his projected career as a barber. The senior could, if he felt the boy to be completely unsatisfactory, dismiss him and take back the barber tools. The barber fed him, clothed him and gave him a little spending money regularly during that first year. At special events, like naming ceremonies, he was given a small tip (one to two shillings) by the household head because of his role as barber's apprentice, which he kept for himself. In 1957, he moved back to his own compound with his mother. He still considers himself a tada njima of the bar-

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882 ber because he still does chores for him, and claims to give the senior about fifteen per cent of his receipts. Furthermore, he does not yet know how to cut face-marks, remove uvula, or perform circumcisions, and thus attends all these ceremonies with his senior barber in order to continue his education. He hopes that by next year he may be allowed to perform some of these operations under supervision. When he has finished his education, it will not be necessary to do anything for the senior. However, he will always pay respect to his ex-teacher for many years to come.

Other apprentices, who were living with strangers, but had gone into the same occupation as their fathers, claimed that they were freer in this situation than if they were in training in their own households. They also stated that it "was nice" (kɔ̀ɔ̀) to travel around and see other places in Bornu. The "freedom" was observed to refer to sexual experimentation, not discipline-respect with the compound head. As we have mentioned, it is considered shameful for children to discuss or acknowledge directly any marriage plans or sexual behaviour in the presence of parents. In some of these cases the mobility is explained by the fact that the boy's father was dead and his mother or grandparent has sent him off to a relative or a friend in order to learn the dead father's craft. In general, the boy completes his learning of agricultural skills, the planting, hoeing and harvesting of the various crops, as well as the clearing of new land in this period. Most often during his adolescence he acquires one or more plots of land of his own, either through inheritance, from the local political leader, by purchase or gift, or by going farther afield from his village and clearing new bushland. He also becomes acquainted with

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882 at least one non-agricultural occupation, even if it is just the marketing of agricultural commodities as is the case with surplus producers.

882 In summary then, adolescence (in the limited sense referred to above) sharply divides male and female roles. The female has taken on her role as a married woman and it is within this status that she completes the learning of skills necessary for her adult role in society. Her status attributes may shift and change during her mature life. She may become single again (most women do), remarry, and bear children, but the framework of her adulthood is entered into at first virilocal marriage, at or before puberty. For the boy, adolescence is socially entered into at his circumcision and congeals psychologically after physiological puberty. He utilizes this period to learn the multitude of interpersonal and occupational skills which he requires as an adult, and a potential family head.

582 One of the interesting functional results of having an [561] extra age status for males only is its artificial increase in the [165] availability of women for marriage. If we consider for the sake of [162] argument that the Kanuri life span is sixty years and the ratio of men to women is roughly one to one,(1) then with women marrying roughly around the age of ten to twelve and men marrying roughly around the age of twenty to twenty-two, women are marriageable for approximately fifty and men for forty years respectively. In other words, women would be of marriageable status one-fifth longer in time relative to men.(2)

(1) Bornu Census: 1951. Males: 790, 361. Females: 805, 347.
(2) If the life span is put at a smaller figure, as it probably ought to be to correspond with the facts, then this ratio would be larger because the length of adolescence is a constant.

858 is considered too young to understand that it must not do this or that. Its primary task is to survive and feed at the breast while becoming identified as a new member in its immediate society.

867 After weaning (and perhaps adoption) the steady, inexorable process of socialisation training is applied to the child. This childhood training teaches the young Kanuri slowly but with ever increasing emphasis the central importance of the behaviour norm. Especially is this true of bàrzum (discipline-respect) whose necessity and moral primacy the growing child is taught to understand and utilize. This means that the child is taught to shift and extend the culturally prescribed modes of behaviour from one situation to another, and from person to person. From the point of view of the individual, childhood 867 training results in a picture of society. Of major importance in this 571 picture or image of society is its personal diffuseness. The person learns that there is not necessarily a final or definite locus of power and authority residing in any particular person. Instead there is rank and status, and the individual learns to respond in a culturally prescribed fashion to many combinations and permutations of these role characteristics by applying the proper behaviour norms. This, in turn, prepares the individual to live in the adult world of Kanuri social relations in which there are multitudes of ranks to which he may be called upon to react.

561 By the end of childhood, as the Kanuri define it, which 867 means somewhere between the ages of nine to thirteen, the sex roles • 882 and many of the accompanying behaviours have been learned. From this period onward, the development towards adult status is sharply dif- [582] ferentiated for males and females. Girls enter into their first marriage at this time, while boys begin the occupational training that

882 will lead them to their adult roles in the socio-economic structure of
582 the society. Since boys do not marry until the end of this period, first marriages are much later for males as compared to females.

885 By maturity, the Kanuri mean several things. For a man it means that he is married, has a compound of his own, an occupation, the use of some land for farming, a recognized position in the community organization as the head of a household and some degree of independence. When some of these social attributes are lacking the person often refers to himself as a "small boy" no matter what his age. There is no one status term meaning maturity for females, although terms exist which define her status as a woman who has had a child or not, as middle aged, and so on.

888 Old age for women often means dependence upon her sons if she has any, plus some petty trade in order to help sustain herself economically. For men, old age can be viewed on a continuum running from the one pole of successful seniority achieved or ascribed during life, to its opposable and supportative complement, subordination. Some achieve their seniority, others support this achievement by acting as subordinates, sometimes only as stepping stones to their own growth in seniority, or at other times, as a life goal in itself. However, it should be remembered that all men, even the Shehu, are in some sense subordinate in the total social structure.

56 The discussion of stratification has been organized within a theoretical framework in which the complex differentiation of Kanuri society is classified into status dimensions. These are sets of agreed upon rankings of persons within some specified area of behaviour. For the present discussion the status dimensions of ethnic membership, occupation, birth ascription, wealth, and rural/urban status, have been considered in some detail.